



The Lincoln Kinsman

Number 48

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

June, 1942

Caroline W. and Charles S. Hanks

Caroline and Charles Hanks were the children of Rev. Stedman Wright Hanks, a graduate of Amherst College, with theological training at Union and Yale Theological Seminaries. There was a striking similarity in both looks and character, between Stedman Hanks and Abraham Lincoln which caused Professor Andrew P. Peabody of Harvard to remark, "The Rev. Mr. Hanks of this city is so like the President that either might have sat for the other's portrait."

It was this close resemblance that Stedman Hanks bore to Abraham Lincoln as well as a similarity of family names that induced two of Mr. Hanks' six children to give some time and attention to the family genealogy.

Charles Stedman Hanks, the minister's only son, was born April 10, 1856. He graduated from Harvard College in 1879 and later from the Law School of Boston College. He became a practicing lawyer in Boston and traveled extensively in Europe. He died in 1908.

Caroline Hanks Hitchcock, fifth

child of Stedman Hanks, was born September 20, 1863. She graduated from the Harvard Annex, now Radcliffe College, and on January 19, 1887 married Samuel H. Hitchcock. Mrs. Caroline Hanks Hitchcock is still living in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

The New England Hankses

Mrs. Hitchcock resided in the midst of the largest colony of Hankses in America, the New England family by that name. Her first efforts were spent in gathering the genealogical records of the descendants of Benjamin Hanks, who settled in Pembroke, Plymouth County, Massachusetts. Benjamin was Mrs. Hitchcock's first American Hanks forebear. She found her ancestors to be an inventive and industrious people. The first bells cast in America are said to have been cast by a Hanks. The first tower clock in America, an ingenious invention of a Hanks, was placed in the Dutch Church in New York City and the first silk mills in America were erected by Rodney Hanks.

Mrs. Hitchcock's genealogy of the New England branch of the family was very complete and a summary of her work in this branch of the family may be seen in the *Lincoln Kinsman*, number 37.

Charles Hanks' English Researches

While Mrs. Hitchcock was more keenly interested in the Hanks genealogical problem than her brother, it is evident that Charles put a lot of time and money into the project, especially in studying the English background of the family. He made many trips abroad with the Hanks genealogical effort always in mind.

Charles Hanks wrote to his sister Caroline, from Oxford, England on July 4, 1897, "For the sake of the Hanks genealogy I have given up sight-seeing," and the voluminous English records on the Hankses in England and the bulk of the correspondence which followed gave evidence of the large amount of time he gave to the genealogical quest. Charles Hanks also wrote "I have seen every Hanks that lives in London," and with respect to other places visited, he said "it has taken a great deal of time to get these facts." He might have concluded also, as his notes imply, that he had spent much money on the project.

To Charles S. Hanks goes the honor of having discovered the Hanks colony at Martinsburg in Wiltshire, England from which the American branches of the family are descended. It might be said without fear of contradiction that he gathered with the help of his sister partly through correspondence, the most exhaustive collection of Hanks manuscripts which has been assembled on the Eng-

lish branch of the family. Thirty years later another American biographer traveled over part of the same ground in quest of information about the family, but he lacked the personal appeal that one whose name was Hanks would have among Hanks descendants. While Charles Hanks did little traveling in America in the interests of the genealogy he did considerable corresponding with members of the Hanks family both in America and England.

He not only interviewed members of the Hanks family in England and secured duly authorized records in the archives of the depositories, but when in France, Germany and other European countries he pursued his hobby, wherever he might find a clue that would lead to a Hanks contact.

Hanks Families in the South

The spark of interest which spurred Mrs. Hitchcock to enlarge her genealogical efforts to include the southern branch of the family was her conviction that Abraham Lincoln's mother must have been a member of the same Hanks family from which the New England group descended. The striking resemblance of her own father to Abraham Lincoln was the ever present fact that urged her on.

One of the many genealogical itineraries which Mrs. Hitchcock mapped out took her through several southern states. She left Cambridge, Massachusetts on Tuesday, April 9, 1895 and did not arrive back home until May 19. She stopped to interview people and search records at the following places.

Left Cambridge, Mass., April 9.
Staten Island, N. Y., April 9.
New York, N. Y., April 12.

Brooklyn, N. Y., April 13.
Jersey City, N. J., April 17.
Philadelphia, Pa., April 18.
Norristown, Pa., April 19.
Trenton, N. J., April 20.
Philadelphia, Pa., April 20.
Washington, D. C., April 23.
Baltimore, Md., April 25.
Cumberland Valley, Pa., May 3.
Harpers Ferry, Md., May 3.
Stanton, Va., May 4.
Ronceverte, W. Va., May 5.
Union, W. Va., May 5.
Maple Lawn, W. Va., May 5.
Lewisburg, W. Va., May 6.
Vanceburg, Ky., May 7.
Ashland, Ky., May 7.
Mt. Sterling, Ky., May 8.
Lexington, Ky., May 9.
Lawrenceburg, Ky., May 10.
Louisville, Ky., May 10.
Stevensport, Ky., May 11.
Elizabethtown, Ky., May 13.
Hodgensville, Ky., May 14.
New Haven, Ky., May 14.
Bardstown, Ky., May 14.
Springfield, Ky., May 15.
Louisville, Ky., May 15.
Lexington, Ky., May 16.
Knoxville, Tenn., May 17.
Bristol, Va., May 18.
Wytheville, Va., May 18.
New York, N. Y., May 19.
Cambridge, Mass., May 19.

On this long itinerary Mrs. Hitchcock met a large number of people who were descendants of the southern branch of the family originating in Virginia. She concluded that these southern Hankses were descendants of one of Benjamin Hanks' children, named William. As it will also be observed from the itinerary that she visited many of the communities of Kentucky associated with the Lincolns

which must have greatly renewed her interest in genealogy.

Mrs. Hitchcock came to the conclusion that "all branches of the Hanks family throughout England and America seem to have come from the beautiful town of Malmsburg in Wiltshire, England." In the assertion she was probably correct. Possibly the most confusing but natural assumption which she made, was the conclusion that the William Hanks which she discovered in Amelia County, Virginia was the son of Benjamin of Massachusetts, and on this relationship she based the connection between the New England and southern branches.

Mrs. Hitchcock could account for all of Benjamin's children except William, born July 16, 1702 and the marriages of all the children except his are recorded in Plymouth County. The Massachusetts traditions claimed that this William embarked on a ship for Virginia and settled near the mouth of the Rappahamock River. There was a large Hanks colony at this place much earlier than 1702 and two generations of William Hankses already residing there, one old enough to be the father and the other the grandfather of William Hanks of Massachusetts born in 1702.

But this fact did not necessarily invalidate Mrs. Hitchcock's theory as she claimed the William of Massachusetts was the father of the Hanks men who settled in Amelia County, although there has been an attempt to discount her statements about the Amelia County Hankses, documentary records now available, sustain her in the claim that there were two brothers, Joseph and Abraham Hanks, who lived there as early as 1740. Further investigations prove that the

The Lincoln Kinsman

Published Monthly by
LINCOLNIANA PUBLISHERS

Box 1110—Fort Wayne, Ind.

**EDITOR**

DR. LOUIS A. WARREN,

Director, Lincoln National Life Foundation

BUSINESS MANAGER

MAURICE A. COOK

Annual Subscription.....\$2.00
Single Copies......25

**SERIES ON RELIABILITY OF SOURCES
USED BY KINSMEN OF THE LINCOLNS
AND HANKSES.**

No. 43 John and Charles Hanks

No. 44 James L. Nall

No. 45 Dennis Friend Hanks

No. 46 Charles Friend's Notes

No. 47 Squire Thompson and Charlotte

Vawter

No. 48 Caroline and Charles S. Hanks

Joseph Hanks who settled in Kentucky was most certainly from Amelia County, Virginia. It is hardly probable however, that the Joseph, with brother Abraham, who entered land in Amelia County as early as 1835, could have been a son of William, born in Massachusetts in 1702, unless it was entered in the name of Joseph as a minor, but there may have been more than one Joseph. We do not believe that the connection between the New England and southern branches of the Hankses can as yet be shown by duly authorized records.

The Book "Nancy Hanks"

On the long southern itinerary Mrs. Hitchcock found many important records that stirred up a new interest in the maternal ancestry of Abraham Lincoln. Possibly the most valuable discovery was at Bardstown, county seat of Nelson County, where she found the will of Joseph Hanks.

It was the story of Lincoln's reputed illegitimacy which Mrs. Hitchcock

heard in so many places that most deeply disturbed her. On her visit to Mt. Sterling, Kentucky on Wednesday, May 8, 1895 she interviewed Judge Peters who a year later made this affidavit with respect to her visit:

"A lady, who said her maiden name was Hanks and place of residence Massachusetts (I think), came to me last summer and asked me if I had not heard the Hankses, of Montgomery, say that Abraham Lincoln's mother was named Hanks. I told her no, that I never had, but had always heard that her name was Hornback. She is the only one I ever heard express a doubt of Abraham Lincoln's illegitimacy." (Boyd, *The Sorrows of Nancy*, p. 84.)

Deeply impressed by the many false stories about the paternity of Abraham Lincoln and the traditional unworthiness of his mother, with documents in her possession which she felt refuted all of these false claims, Mrs. Hitchcock decided to publish the story of Nancy Hanks, based on the discoveries made in Kentucky and elsewhere. She secured the foremost Lincoln student in the country, Miss Ida M. Tarbell, to write the introduction to the book. One paragraph by Miss Tarbell sets forth the purpose of Mrs. Hitchcock in bringing out the book in these words:

"When convinced that she had the documentary proofs which would clear the name of Nancy Hanks, Mrs. Hitchcock concluded that she ought not to withhold them from the world until she could publish her elaborate genealogy. She saw that the biographers of Lincoln which came out almost yearly were only fixing more firmly in the public mind cruel and false traditions. She accordingly pre-

pared the following simple story of the life of Nancy Hanks."

Mrs. Hitchcock published her book under the title of "Nancy Hanks, The Story of Abraham Lincoln's Mother" and it went to the press in 1899. It created a new interest in Lincoln genealogy and was one of the first discussions to challenge the authority of William Herndon's genealogical conclusions about the Hanks family. Regardless of several mistakes that crept into the book it is more authentic in portraying Nancy Hanks and her early surroundings than any of the books which have tried to discredit it. Its major contribution, however, was to check public opinion about Lincoln's parentage and maternal ancestry which was rapidly forming an erroneous opinion about the President's background.

It must be admitted that Mrs. Hitchcock drew two major conclusions which seemed to her to be logical ones but which have proven to be in error. The supposition that the William Hanks she discovered in Virginia was one and the same as the William, son of Benjamin Hanks, of Massachusetts, cannot be maintained, although subsequent Lincoln students writing on the same subject made just as grievous errors in assuming that a certain Hanks bearing the name Joseph in Virginia, was one and the same as a Joseph Hanks in West Virginia, and another Joseph Hanks in Kentucky.

The other conclusion which Mrs. Hitchcock drew was a most natural one. In the same book where the inventory of the estate of Abraham Lincoln, the pioneer, was entered she found the will of Joseph Hanks who had a daughter, Nancy. Inasmuch as

Thomas, the son of Abraham, married a Nancy Hanks, and no other Nancy Hanks but this one was known to her, she immediately drew the conclusion that Thomas Lincoln had married a daughter of Joseph Hanks, which deduction cannot be maintained. This assumption is not nearly so illogical as to assume that Joseph Hanks had another daughter he did not name in his will, and that the Nancy Hanks who married Thomas Lincoln was the illegitimate child of this supposed daughter named Lucy Hanks.

Mrs. Hitchcock was also in error with respect to the Shipley family connections with the Lincolns and Hankses. While she was misinformed about the identity of the pioneer Lincoln's wife, her conclusion about the connections of the Shipley family with the Berry, Mitchell and Hanks families can now be sustained by documentary sources.

She did not pretend to introduce anything original in the Shipley genealogy. The statement that both Lincoln's paternal grandmother, whom she called Mary Shipley Lincoln, and his maternal grandmother whom she called Nancy Shipley Hanks, wife of Joseph Hanks, cannot be sustained by any available records. The best evidence now at hand does imply that Lincoln's maternal grandmother was Lucy Shipley Hanks, whose husband was James Hanks.

Mrs. Hitchcock was confused by the Nall tradition in naming the Shipley women. She claimed Richard Berry's wife was named Lucy Shipley, when it was Rachel. She called Robert Mitchell's wife Sarah Shipley, when it was Naomi, and supposed that Nancy Hanks' mother was

named Nancy Shipley Hanks, when it was Lucy Shipley Hanks.

Regardless of these inaccuracies with respect to given names in both the Shipley and the Hanks families, and the confusion about the Nancy Hanks in the will of Joseph Hanks she laid a foundation for all future documentary studies about Lincoln's maternal ancestry.

An Important Document

While some statements made by Mrs. Hitchcock in her little book are in error, she gave rather wide circulation to one document in facsimile, published for the first time, which will always have to be considered before any important conclusion can be drawn with reference to the identity of Nancy Hanks and her mother, Lucy. The publication of the Joseph Hanks' will was well worth the cost of the entire effort.

How elated Mrs. Hitchcock must have been upon the discovery of a document which she sincerely felt solved the problem of Lincoln's maternal ancestry and established the regularity of his mother's birth. While the will of Joseph Hanks did not do all that Mrs. Hitchcock hoped it might, it did contribute a very important negative assertion.

The theory that Lincoln's mother was the illegitimate child of Lucy Hanks, a young woman who had three sisters named Elizabeth, Polly and Nancy, all daughters of Joseph Hanks, has been accepted by a large number of Lincoln students ever since the time Herndon published an interview he had with Dennis Hanks. Those who cling to this story will forever be confronted with a direct contradiction in the form of a duly

authorized public record, signed by Joseph Hanks as his last will and testament. Their only recourse is to break the will, so to speak.

Those who would break the will must make three assumptions: first, Joseph Hanks had another living daughter not named in the will; second, this daughter was named Lucy; and the third assumption is that the daughter Lucy was disowned and not named in the will because of her moral delinquency.

Joseph Hanks, in this important paper, names four sons and three daughters. He mentions each one separately and remembers each one with a special bequest. He then states that his wife may enjoy the residue of the estate during her lifetime and which is "afterwards to be equally divided between all my children." It seems quite clear from an unprejudiced reading of the will that all of the children who were to benefit by the division of the estate had been named, but according to the the witnesses for the plaintiff one child named Lucy has been left out.

No one of the children mentioned in this will has ever left any written record that there was a child named Lucy in the Joseph Hanks family, but the many grandchildren of Joseph Hanks have left all kinds of statements as to how they were related to the President. The testimony of one witness, Dennis Hanks, is of no more value than the testimonies of a dozen other grandchildren who have contradicted him, and whose written reminiscences are in the files of the Lincoln National Life Foundation.

Just one reference to the assumption that Joseph Hanks disowned a

daughter named Lucy for moral delinquency. He signed his will on January 8, 1793 and lived for approximately four months after it was made, so it was not the writing of a man in the throes of death. Regardless of how Lucy had behaved previous to 1790, on April 30th of that year she married an excellent man named Henry Sparrow, well known to the Hanks family. Nearly three years had elapsed between the time of Lucy's marriage and the signing of the will and in the meanwhile two children had been born to Henry and Lucy Hanks Sparrow. Three years is a long time for a father to hold resentment against a daughter who had become a faithful wife and mother with a good husband, then as his last act refuse to recognize her in his will. Let the will of Joseph Hanks stand as he signed it.

The Hanks Genealogy

It was the purpose of both Charles Hanks and his sister from the very beginning to publish a genealogy of the Hanks family and to this end they both worked. Aside from the voluminous correspondence, Mrs. Hitchcock sent out for return over a thousand genealogical questionnaires in the form of a four-page booklet which in itself was a mammoth undertaking.

The source material Mrs. Hitchcock had gathered over a period of ten years consisted of her own field notes, several hundred letters from members of the Hanks and associated families, a thousand genealogical tables, a large number of duly authorized records from the archives of more than a dozen states, and biographical notes made by Charles Hanks in England.

When the genealogy was completed and ready for the press it consisted of 419 typewritten pages and was placed in the hands of a publisher. The excessive cost, however, of having it published caused Mrs. Hitchcock to send out a note about subscriptions to determine, if possible, how many copies were needed and to gain some idea of how much might be realized from subscriptions. The first thought was to ask \$5.00 for the book and then later \$3.50 was considered but Mrs. Hitchcock and her brother found little response and became somewhat discouraged.

A letter which Charles Hanks wrote on March 25, 1902 to a prospective subscriber and member of the Hanks clan reveals how much work and money had already been expended on the book. He wrote:

"My sister has done an extraordinary amount of work in getting the data together and I believe its historical value will be as great as that of any genealogy ever published in this country, especially in reference to Abraham Lincoln and Nancy Hanks. When I write you that she has already spent over a thousand dollars for postage, you will appreciate what she has done and this is only a part. I personally have contributed to 'the good cause' more than I am willing to admit and am still willing to hold an oar if others will give a little time to it."

Enough people could not be found however, to "hold an oar" to make printing advisable and this first attempt to publish went by default.

Mrs. Hitchcock then worked out a plan to publish an abbreviated story of the Hanks family using a great many pictures and developing it

from the human interest angle. When this revised and condensed manuscript was ready it contained 233 typewritten pages arranged in five chapters. It was to be profusely illustrated, which alone, made the cost excessive so it was also laid aside.

In 1932 one of the nephews of Mrs. Hitchcock secured a professional genealogist to copy for the *New England Historical and Genealogical Register* the data gathered by Charlotte and Charles Hanks on the New England branch of the family. It was published in the January 1932 issue of the *Register*, but little credit was given to either of the original compilers for the years of work they had given to make the genealogy possible. The *Lincoln Kinsman* for July 1941 copied from the manuscripts in its possession a genealogical table of the New England Hankses, so that at last the work of Charlotte and Charles Hanks is finding its way into print.

The Sources

When the editor of the *Lincoln Kinsman* was making his study of Lincoln's parentage in Kentucky he first learned of Mrs. Hitchcock's work, and later on met her at her home in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Just about this time two prominent biographers were engaged in writing Lincoln books and violently attacked the little book Mrs. Hitchcock had written. Knowing something of the sincerity of purpose which Mrs. Hitchcock had exhibited in her researches, a sympathetic attitude toward her efforts was taken with a feeling that eventually the main thesis of her work, supporting the legitimacy of both Lincoln and his mother, would be supported.

Most of the students of Lincolniana who had welcomed the Nancy Hanks publication, with the possible exception of Miss Tarbell, were won back to the old Herndon theory and the old stories of the moral destitution of the Hanks family revived. While Mrs. Hitchcock greatly resented the attack upon the integrity of her work she did not feel equal to combatting the new offensive. Her entire collection of source material was sent to the editor of the *Kinsman* at his home in Kentucky, including the field notes, genealogical lists, correspondence and the manuscripts of both genealogical studies on the Hanks family.

The letter which accompanied this source material stated, "I think I would like to have you keep all the manuscript and use it in whatever way you think best in your future work. I believe in you. I feel sure you are on the right trail and will leave no stone unturned to get at the root of the truth of the matter in regard to Lincoln's ancestry and if in any way I may be permitted to help you I shall be so glad."

The voluminous collection of Hanks data collected by Mrs. Hitchcock and her brother has been supplemented by hundreds of copies of court records from many states in the Union and some day it is hoped that the Lincolniana Publishers will be able to bring out a Hanks genealogy that will be comparable to Waldo Lincoln's *History of the Lincoln Family*. Not until then will Caroline and Charles S. Hanks be compensated for the monumental collection of Hanks data they assembled.